SARON NEWSLETTER

Saron Evangelical Lutheran Church (ELCA)
510 Main Street
St. Joseph, Michigan 49085

Website: www.saronlutheran.org
Email: info@saronlutheran.org
Phone: 269-983-1273
Facebook:www.facebook.com/saronlutheranchurchst.joseph

The Rev. Joan Oleson, Pastor
Home: 269-983-2475
Email: oleson@saronlutheran.org

Marcus Roll, Senior Choir Director,
Bell Choir Director
Email: roll1mc@gmail.com
Irma Gorman, Organist
Margaret Froehlich, Administrative
Assistant
Megan Savage, Financial Secretary
Email: financial@saronlutheran.org
Emily Gaul, Child Care

Typical Sunday Schedule at Saron:
During the School Year:
8:30 & 11:00 A.M. Worship
Childcare provided
9:40 Learning for Ages 2 – Adult

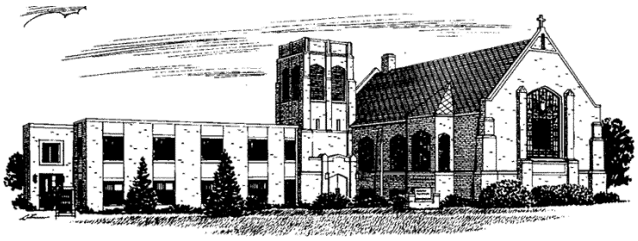
Summers (thru Labor Day weekend):
9:30 Holy Communion
Childcare provided
No Learning Hour

During the present Pandemic:
11:00 a.m. via Zoom
All are welcome!

We hold in prayer:
The Rev. Elizabeth Eaton,
Presiding Bishop, ELCA
The Rev. Dr. Craig Satterlee, Bishop of the
North/West Lower Michigan Synod, ELCA
The Episcopal Diocese of Western MI

Our Companion Synods:
Christian Lutheran Church of Honduras
Lutheran Church of Papua New Guinea
Lutheran Church of Latvia

Saron's Mission:
Joyfully sharing God's love for all!!



May 2021

During these 50 days of Easter we hear in worship from the Acts of the Apostles. It is the story of the early church, complete with the joys and challenges faced by this community of faith as they worked to move forward with Jesus' ministry in the unity of the Holy Spirit. It is the continuing story of God's faithful people. It is our story as the Holy Spirit continues to work in and through us *to joyfully share God's love for all!!!* On May 23 we celebrate once again the coming of the Holy Spirit. On that day we pray, *Mighty God, you breathe life into our bones, and your Spirit brings truth to the world. Send us this Spirit, transform us to your truth, and give us language to proclaim your gospel, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord…Amen*

We pray with boldness. It is a prayer not only for the Day of Pentecost, but for every day.

Pastor Joan

When Will We Meet in Person Again?
Your church council asks this question each month. Like you, it is our deepest desire to worship in-person again. At our April council meeting we decided it is not quite time to do that. The number of cases in Berrien County are still too high; guidelines from the CDC and our governor suggest waiting a little longer is a better option. In the meantime, we are working to be ready, to have the building in order and the people power ready to open with the greatest safety measures in place when it is time to do so. We will do our best to keep you updated! Thanks to all of you who sent in responses to our survey to let us know how you can help out.

Here are a couple of the websites we are watching:
https://berriencounty.maps.arcgis.com/apps/opsdashboard/index.html#/6d5dbc6f036d4568b4d5668c6e4c287f

https://www.michigan.gov/coronavirus/0,9753,7-406-98178_103214-547150--,00.html

In the meantime, watch for Outdoor Small Group Holy Communion options.

Caring and Sharing

In Our Prayers –

Richard Schalon is at the Whitcomb Tower Retirement Center, St. Joseph; **Bernice Koski** is at Woodland Terrace.

Office Hours at Saron (these hours will vary during Covid-19)

Margaret Froehlich (secretary): Mon-Tues, 9 AM - 1 PM
Weds of Newsletter Week, 9 AM - 1 PM
Volunteers: Weds, 9:15 AM - 11 AM (approximately)
Megan Savage (financial secy); Tues & Thurs 5:30 PM
financial@saronlutheran.org

When Pastor is out of town, emergency pastoral care information can be obtained by calling the church office (983.1273) or contacting the president of the congregation.

Note: E-mails meant for Pastor should be addressed to oleson@saronlutheran.org. E-mails to Margaret and the church office should be addressed to info@saronlutheran.org.

Happy Birthday Wishes to Saron's Members in May 2021

May 2 - John Hoodlebrink
3 - Brooklyn Huff
4 – Andrew Fortenbacher
6 – Charlene Baumgartner
9 - Dennis Lundgren
12 - Alexander Maly
Andrew Stankiewicz
13 - Jenna Henderson
15 - Kathie Bradley
19 - Monica Freemire
Jimmy Nicholas
22 - Connor Ashley
Laura Chaddock
23 - Adam Bradley
24 - Elliott Hooper
25 - Matthew Bradley
28 - Marlene Cox
30 - Benjamin Frey
31 - David Bradley

Happy Anniversary Wishes to Saron's Members in 2021

May 2 - Phillip and Kathleen Preston
15 - David and Elizabeth Lundgren
16 - Ted and Ann Dosch
22 – James and Laura Hicks
23 - Edward and Mary Alice Brunner
Ryan and Serena Talbert
25 - Matthew and Amanda Bradley
30 – Robert and Mary Kynast

"God's Blessings for a very happy day and year round"

For additions or corrections, please call the church office at 983-1273. Thank you.

Spring is here and although the church doors remain closed for worship, there are plenty of behind the scenes happenings taking place to keep forward momentum towards life after those doors are thrust open in joyful welcome! The worship enhancement task force has been consulting with companies to gather ideas on what accessibility options would work for Saron. These conversations go beyond seating into areas such as visibility, hybrid worship that allow folks in all circumstances to stay engaged via technology, and accommodations for folks of different ages and abilities. We're also collecting data in regard to needs in other areas of the building and ministry and how best to seek input from the congregation. It will take a lot of listening, consideration and planning to get this right but we are up for the challenge!

As of the end of March, also the end of the first quarter of 2021, we had collected $342,475 towards our 3-year pledge total of $367,205. That is 93% of our goal! This could have gone a lot of different ways with the unusual, challenging circumstances we've all faced but you are choosing hope and faith. Thank you!

Worship

FACEBOOK

We love to share pictures of Saron's ministry on our Facebook page and we get great feedback. It is our practice not to put names with the pictures. If you have questions, or prefer your picture not to appear, please contact Pastor.

SUNDAY SCRIPTURE READINGS

As you prepare for worship, you are invited to read and reflect on the Scriptures for the day.

Sun. May. 2 —
Fifth Sunday of Easter
Acts 8:26-40
Psalm 22:25-31
1 John 4:7-21
John 15:1-8

Sun. May 9 —
Sixth Sunday of Easter
Acts 10:44-48
Psalm 98
1 John 5:1-6
John 15:9-17

Sun. May 16 —
Seventh Sunday of Easter
1:15-17, 21-26
Psalm 1
1 John 5:9-13
John 17:6-19

Sun. May 23 —
Day of Pentecost
Acts 2:1-21
Psalm 104:24-34, 35b
Romans 8:22-27
John 15:26-27; 16:4b-15

Sun. May 30 —
The Holy Trinity
Isaiah 6:1-8
Psalm 29
Romans 8:12-17
John 3:1-17

Youth

Are you in grades 6-12? Please join us for youth group activities! For more info, contact Scott at *scottgaspari@outlook.com or (Cell) 847-373-8825.*

LEARNING

Saron is a congregation seeking to become more fluent in the first language of faith, the language of Scripture, in order that we might live into our calling as a people renewed, enlivened, empowered and sent by the Word.

Tuesday Evening Men's Bible Study

Men's Bible Study will continue our study of ACTS through Tuesday, May 11, 2021. We will start a new study after that and are looking for ideas for a new study.

For more information call Bob Kynast at 269-921-2786 or Don Hafer at 269-985-3637 as to location and/or Zoom information. The gatherings are at 6:00 pm.

All men are invited to join us. As the Bible says "As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another" (Proverbs 27:17).

1ST SUNDAY BOOK DISCUSSION GROUP

We will finish our 2020-2021 season on Sunday, May 2nd, at 6:30 p.m. This will be a Zoom meeting. The sign-on information email will be sent to all of you who have expressed interest in our group. If you want to be included on this list, please contact Kathy Cowall. (269) 428-0354 or kcowall@hotmail.com.

The book open for discussion is "The Dutch House" by Ann Patchett. The award winning, bestselling author weaves a story about a big house, a family, acts of cruelty and kindness over three generations of said family. "What do people acquire, keep, lose or give away and what do they leave behind?" (book jacket) Patchett addresses all this and more in her unique style. Does she do it well? You decide. Come, talk and share your ideas. We will also be selecting the books we will discuss in our next session beginning in October. If you love to read, we would love to have you join us.

"A good book makes you want to live in the story. A great book gives you no choice." (author unknown)

Men's monthly Bible Devotions and Breakfast

Men's Bible Devotion will meet Saturday, May 1, at 9:00. Contact Dennis Lundgren for Zoom information.
The topic is "Who Is Worthy?" and readings are in Revelation 5.

THURSDAY MORNING BIBLE STUDY

The Thursday Study continues a study of Rob Bell's book, "What is the Bible?" The group will meet each Thursday morning at 9:30 via Zoom through May. Please contact Pastor if you would like Zoom info. You can join in, even if you have not read the book. This is a great time to invite someone who lives at a distance and can join us via the internet!

THE BIBLE IN A YEAR

Have you ever wanted to read through the entire Bible in a year? Or do it again? A group of about 7 folks from Saron are doing just that. If you would like to join in, contact Pastor.

Women of the ELCA

Deborah Circle will meet by way of Zoom on Wednesday, May 12, 2021, at 7:00 p.m. Zoom information will be e-mailed to everyone by Colleen Lundgren. A study will be from Gather magazine March 2021 issue, Session Three, page 20, titled Journeys with Angels: comforting, encouraging, protecting angels. At this writing, a study leader is needed for this lesson. If interested, call Melanie at 1-269-449-8399.

Hospitality

Watch for more news as we get closer to getting back together in the building.

Outreach

BENTON HARBOR SOUP KITCHEN

For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me. Matthew 25:35

On March 25th Deb Standen, Coanne Hohman & Sarah Burrow made 62 sack lunches to be served at the Benton Harbor Soup Kitchen.

During the past year there have been many questions asked about the changes at the Soup Kitchen.

***Do people still come, even though it is a sack lunch?** Yes, they do. A sack lunch is a great thing when you are hungry. It is rare when a guest does not say "Thank you" or "God bless you" when given a lunch.

***Do you have more people coming because of job losses?** They expected that, but it did not happen. Supplemental income, extended benefits & the food available in the pandemic response are working well for the guests.

If you feel comfortable helping to prepare a sack lunch at the Soup Kitchen, baking cookies, or have any questions please contact Kathie Bradley (269-921-4665)

Thank you to all who continue to support this ministry with your time, contributions, & prayers. During this pandemic it is even more important to continue Saron's mission of *Joyfully sharing God's love for all!*

After the self-quarantine large cans of fruit are always needed at the Soup Kitchen & can be dropped off anytime at the church.

INCLUSIVITY TASK FORCE

Thank you to all who filled out the task force's recent survey. The results were overwhelmingly positive in its acceptance of the proposed statement of welcome and affirmation. (See below.) With that in mind, our conversations will continue with how best to extend that welcome to the LGBTQIA community as well as the many whom we name in our proposed welcome statement.

If you have any questions, please feel free to call any one of the task force members, as listed here.

Connor Ashley cashley1837@outlook.com
Laurel Gacek 269/470-6062 mlmg2445@sbcglobal.net
Laura Hicks 517/930-0579 lhicks42@gmail.com
Darlene Kiessel 269/313-4062 kiessel@me.com
Diane Madej (Open Hearts. Open Church, N/WLM Synod) 231/670-0328 dianemadej234@gmail.com
Pastor Joan Oleson 269/983-1273
oleson@saronlutheran.org

Here is Saron's proposed Welcome Statement, as affirmed by the council.

"As a community of faith who joyfully shares God's love for all, we believe our lives and faith are strengthened by diversity. We strive to be a community who welcomes people of every ability, age, citizenship status, ethnicity, gender identity and expression, language, marital status, political perspective, race, and sexual orientation. Whatever life's circumstance, we openly welcome and value you. We celebrate God's unconditional love and respond joyfully to your presence here. All are welcome. You are welcome."

Living Water Ministries Virtual 5K

Living Water Ministries, our synod's camping ministry, is sponsoring its first-ever virtual 5k event, benefiting the Living Water Ministries Scholarship Fund! May 5th is the date, although you can walk/run anytime from May 1 – May 8. The goal is to raise at least $5,000 to help bolster outreach efforts and help more kids to go to camp. Your participation will help Living Water Ministries build capacity to welcome new campers when we return in 2022 – which is sure to be the best season ever!

Whether you are a seasoned runner, an avid walker or an individual looking for a fun, personal challenge, Living Water Ministries is grateful for your participation! Cost of the event is a $50 donation. For more information and to register, go to https://elcalivingwater.kindful.com/register/the-5k-5k-2021.

Interfaith Action

Interfaith Action (swmichiganinterfaith.org) is a coalition of over 40 faith communities in Allegan, Berrien, Cass, St. Joseph, and Van Buren Counties. Some members of Saron attend their meetings and work with various task force groups. One of the goals of Interfaith Action is to promote understanding and respect for diversity. We hope this discussion will advance that goal by enriching our appreciation for our shared humanity.

Quote for the Week

"We are all one in love. . . . When I look at myself as an individual, I see that I am nothing. It is only in unity with my fellow spiritual seekers that I am anything at all. It is this foundation of unity that will save humanity." -Julian of Norwich

Blossomland CROP Walk -- Sunday, May 16, 2021

For the next 30 days put on your most comfortable walking shoes and join Saron's Outreach Committee in the 2nd Annual *Virtual* CROP Hunger Walk to be held…..anytime you want to walk and at your own pace! Of course, you all know the reason why the walk is not in person and we are reminded daily in the national news of hunger in America and across the globe. Many of us would like to do more for those less fortunate so here is a great opportunity!

First, a little background. The CROP Hunger Walk is a community fundraising event sponsored by Church World Services (CWS), an international relief, development and refugee resettlement agency. Money raised by CROP Hunger Walks nationwide is used to provide food, medical care, disaster relief, and self-help development for people around the world in need. This year's theme is **Raising animals, growing communication in the Dominican Republic.**

25% of funds raised go back into our community! This year's agencies benefiting from our generosity are:

Benton Harbor Street Ministries
Benton Harbor Soup Kitchen
Bread of Heaven Food Pantry
Catholic Community Center
Fairplain Food Bank
Salvation Army

Attention Saron's Youth!!!! This year a donor is giving a matching gift of $125 for every group of 3 or more youth (ages 21-) who raise at least $250. (Maximum 2 groups per church). That's potentially $375 of impact for $250 raised!

How can you participate? Set up your team (family/friends) or individual walk pages online:

1. Go to www.crophungerwalk.org/saintjoseph.mi
2. Click on the blue "Register"
3. Follow instructions
4. Share your team page and personal page via email, Facebook, etc.
5. Online giving: https://www.crophungerwalk.org/saintjosephmi

You can also search for Saron participants, such as Karen Johnson or Joan Oleson. We'll share your name if you let us know you have registered and are walking!

Or simply mail checks to Crop Walk 2021, c/o Saron Lutheran Church, 510 Main Street, St. Joseph, MI. (No cash please.) MAKE CHECKS PAYABLE TO CWS/CROP. A few days after the May 16, 2021 day of the Crop Walk, Recruiter Karen Johnson will deliver all checks to the local organizer, St. Joseph First United Methodist Church.

Hope to see Saron's members out on our local walking trails! And please use your social media connections to broaden Saron's base of contributors!

Outreach Committee: Karen Johnson (269-313-9510) and Jim Manore (269-281-0055)

Support

Tax Incentives during the Covid-19 Pandemic

"Above-the-line" tax deduction for charitable contributions

The federal government recently passed legislation to provide financial relief to families as a result of Covid-19. As part of the CARES Act, for the purpose of increasing the work of charitable organizations, individual taxpayers will receive new tax incentives for making charitable donations. The provision encourages individuals to contribute to religious, charitable, and educational organizations by creating a new "above-the-line" deduction (i.e. for taxpayers who take the standard deduction). This deduction permits deduction of up to $300 of annual monetary contributions.

This is applicable for tax years beginning after 2019, and does not sunset after 2020. A related provision increases the limitations on deductions for charitable contributions by individuals who do itemize. For those individuals, the 50% of adjusted gross income limitation is suspended for cash contributions made in 2020.

For members over 72 years old drawing income from an IRA, the Required Minimum Distribution (RMD) is waived for 2020, thereby reducing your tax burden.

Effective January 1, 2020, the CARES Act waived RMDs for defined contribution 401(k) plans, 403(b) plans, governmental 457(b) plans, and IRAs for calendar year 2020. The waiver applies to RMDs to be made in 2020 and to 2019 RMDs that were due by April 1, 2020 (if not already made in 2019). The good news is that Qualified Charitable Distributions can still be made directly from an IRA account to the church that will both benefit our ministry and reduce the member's taxable income. As always, members are advised to check with their tax advisor for the latest information and interpretations before filing.

STOCK DONATIONS

Saron partners with TD Ameritrade, a brokerage firm, to accept stock donations. If you would like to donate stock, email Joe Ulrey to receive more information. Thanks! Joe Ulrey josephulrey@yahoo.com

SARON LUTHERAN CHURCH
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A Congregation of:
The North/West Lower Michigan Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

May 2021

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Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
All Sundays Worship at 11:00 a.m. Via Zoom Confirmation 9:30 Via zoom						1 9:00 a.m. Men's Bible Devotion Meeting Via Zoom
2 6:30 p.m. 1st Sunday Book Discussion Group	**3** 11:00 a.m. Prayer Time (in homes)	**4** 6:00 p.m. Men's Bible Study Via Zoom	**5**	**6** 9:00 a.m. Bible Study Via Zoom	**7**	8
9 Worship at 11:00 a.m. Via Zoom Confirmation 9:30 Via zoom Sunday School 10:10 via Zoom	**10** 11:00 a.m. Prayer Time (in homes) 6:00p.m. Support Comm. Via Zoom Newsletter Articles due	**11** 6:00 p.m. Men's Bible Study Via Zoom	**12** 7:00 p.m. Deborah Circle Meeting by Via Zoom	**13** 9:00 a.m. Bible Study Via Zoom	**14**	15
16 Worship at 11:00 a.m. Via Zoom Confirmation 9:30 Via zoom	**17** 11:00 a.m. Prayer Time (in homes) 7:00 p.m. Church Council Meeting	**18** 6:00 p.m. Men's Bible Study Via Zoom	**19**	**20** 9:00 a.m. Bible Study Via Zoom	**21**	22
23 Worship at 11:00 a.m. Via Zoom	**24** 11:00 a.m. Prayer Time (in homes)	**25** 6:00 p.m. Men's Bible Study Via Zoom	**26**	**27** 9:00 a.m. Bible Study Via Zoom	**28**	29
30 Worship at 11:00 a.m. Via Zoom	**31** Memorial Day					